



Hinsdale, NH – Brattleboro, VT Connecticut River Bridge Project

Existing Bridges Subcommittee Meeting #3

**Hinsdale Police Station
10 Main Street
Hinsdale, NH 03451**

MINUTES

May 23, 2019

Subcommittee Attendees: Kathryn Lynch, *Co-Chair, Town of Hinsdale*; Patrick Moreland, *Co-Chair, Town of Brattleboro*; Mark Carignan, *Brattleboro Police Department*; Steve Diorio, *Hinsdale Board of Selectmen*; Prudence MacKinney, *Formerly of Vermont Department of Health*; Frank Podlenski, *Hinsdale Highway Department*; Ed Smith, *Hinsdale Economic Development Representative*; Sharon Smith, *Hinsdale Historical Society*.

Staff and Technical Assistance: Chris Baker, Jon Griffin, and Ross Gouin, *Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTTrans)*; J. B. Mack, *Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC)*; Marion Major, *Windham Regional Commission (WRC)*; Anthony King, Brett McCrea, David Scott, Trent Zanes, *NHDOT*.

Guests: Bob Audette, *Brattleboro Reformer*; Jill Collins, *Town of Hinsdale*; Michael Fairchild, *Brattleboro Resident*; Kathy Urffer, *Connecticut River Conservancy*.

The meeting began at 10:00 a.m.

I. Meeting Minutes of June 18, 2018

Motion: To approve the minutes of June 18, 2018 as presented.

Motion by Kathryn Lynch, seconded by Ed Smith. Approved by unanimous vote.

II. Presentation on Summary of Existing Conditions Report

J. B. Mack and Marion Major presented baseline information relating to the Anna Hunt Marsh bridge, Charles Dana bridge, and Hinsdale Island (attached). This included a review of socioeconomic and commuting information from the US Census Bureau, bridge inspection reports, a review of agreements and documents associated with the Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge project (Project #12210), a report describing interview results with major abutters to the project area, NH DES and a representative of Abenaki culture, and an overview of maps looking at development constraints, trail plans and zoning in the area.

The following feedback was provided during and after the presentation.

- Michael Fairchild stated that Hinsdale Island is a poor boat launching area due to the muck bottom and a strong eddy on the eastern side of the river.

- A comment was made that they expected the bicycle commuting rate to be much higher than what is shown in the Census data.
- Sharon Smith asked who would be responsible for the future maintenance of the Anna Hunt Marsh and Charles Dana bridges. J. B. Mack stated that at previous meetings, NHDOT had expressed its intention to rehabilitate the bridges and turn them over to the towns, however, he pointed to sections of the Environmental Assessment document and Bi-State Bridge Agreement for Project #12210 which state that the States of New Hampshire and Vermont will go through a negotiating process to work out the question and that it is not a settled question yet. There was some discussion about NHDOT's abandonment of NH 119 and Jill Collins noted that the Town of Hinsdale would need to go through the process of determining if they want to accept the road.
- Michael Fairchild asked if there was a bicycle way under the new proposed bridge and Patrick Moreland responded that the Town of Brattleboro does not currently have a right-of-way agreement.
- Ed Smith noted that development is not likely on Hinsdale Island because you couldn't have a septic tank on the island.
- Patrick Moreland gave an update on Amtrak's Americans with Disabilities Act plans for the train platform outside of the Brattleboro train station.
- There was a general conversation about electricity and lighting on the Anna Hunt Marsh and Charles Dana bridges. Brett McCrea pointed out that electricity would probably be left to the towns to maintain. A point was made that lighting would be important for public safety. Ed Smith noted that Eversource would no longer be interested in maintaining the power lines going out to the existing bridges or island.
- Kathy Urffer suggested that as part of the Existing Conditions report, that SWRPC and WRC consult the *Connecticut River Management Plan*, *Recreation Management Plan* and *Water Resources Management Plan*. She noted that she is looking to make recreational recommendations to Great River Hydro as part of their permitting process with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.
- Kathryn Lynch asked if Whetstone Station Restaurant and Brewery was planning to have outdoor seating on Bridge Street (where their small parking lot and entrance are currently located). Michael Fairchild noted that there is very limited parking around Depot Street. It was pointed out that it will be important to think about parking options if there are going to be events held on the bridges and island.
- Michael Fairchild asked if there was a plan to have a stairway on the Brattleboro, VT side of the new bridge that connects to Depot Street.

J. B. Mack thanked everyone for their comments, summarized some of the key feedback provided by the group that merits further research and indicated that information from the presentation would be turned into a report that will be shared with the Subcommittee at a later date.

III. Discuss Design Opportunities with School Programs

Marion Major explained that staff from WRC and SWRPC were thinking about ways to get additional technical assistance with the visioning process for the existing bridges and island. They pointed out that the regional planning commissions do not have design expertise and had approached the Conway School and the Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning program at the University of Massachusetts to see if they might be interested in having students get involved in helping with the visioning process and developing renderings for future uses of the bridges and island based on the Subcommittee and the general

public's input. There was consensus from the Existing Bridges Subcommittee that it sounded like a good idea. Marion Major said they would take that recommendation to the next Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge Project Advisory Committee meeting which is scheduled for June 5th.

IV. Project Schedule Update

Marion Major presented an updated project schedule to the Subcommittee. There was no feedback on the schedule.

V. Next Meeting

J. B. Mack noted that the next meeting for the Subcommittee on the project schedule would occur in July 2019 and asked if the Subcommittee wanted to meet during the summer. Marion Major said that the purpose of the next meeting would be to begin defining goals for the use/redevelopment of the existing bridges and island area, and preparing for general public outreach. There was a general discussion about the timing of the meeting as it relates to general public outreach as well as questions about future ownership/maintenance of the existing bridges. The Subcommittee decided to meet in July 2019 and J. B. Mack stated that he would send out a poll to determine a date.

VI. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

VII. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

J. B. Mack
Principal Planner